

PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

The city and county have been favored with a long and distinguished legacy of parks, recreational facilities, and open space. The earliest planners and policy makers recognized the strength conferred upon a community possessing an abundant, quality system of parks and open spaces, along with the support facilities to enjoy them. Built upon Nebraska's landscape and local community traditions, the city and county have inherited a treasured trove of emerald jewels and other riches for present and future generations to savor and cherish.

This section examines the Comprehensive Plan principles and specific strategies that will help guide the further enhancement of the community's parks, recreation, and open space. Specific strategies are discussed regarding community parks regional, community and neighborhood parks, community and recreation centers, swimming pools, an ice arena, open space and greenway linkages, and the urban forest.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In addition to the ideals embodied in the Comprehensive Plan's Vision, guiding principles intended to help direct the contributions made to the community by its parks, recreational facilities, urban forest, and open space are as follows:

- It is recognized that parks and open space enhance the quality of life of the community's residents and are central to the community's economic development strategy (i.e., the community's ability to attract and retain viable business and industry is directly linked to quality of life issues, including indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities).
- Signature landscapes are defined as those areas and natural features that are unique to Lincoln and Lancaster County, and residents and visitors therefore directly associate these areas and features with the identity of the community. Acquisition and development of parks and open space areas should conserve and enhance these areas and features.
- It is important that the community continue to acquire parkland and conserve open space areas commensurate with expanding development and population growth. The responsibilities for acquisition and development of parkland, and conservation of open space must be shared among many cooperating partner agencies and organizations.
- Comprehensive and adaptive systematic urban forestry management approaches are needed to sustain the structure

(e.g. number of trees, sizes, species composition, and tree location) health, and benefits of our urban forest. It is essential that adequate human and financial resources be allocated and specifically dedicated to sustaining our community's expanding public green infrastructure in conjunction with increasing development and population growth.

• Public and private partnerships are important in the development of recreational opportunities and the preservation of environmental resources that bring a high quality of life to the City and County.

REGIONAL PARKS

DESCRIPTION

Regional parks are large tracts of land that encompass special or unique facilities and features that are of interest to the diverse groups throughout the community. Sites offer opportunities for a variety of activities, a portion of which are generally centered around natural or environmental features. There is generally an emphasis on preserving natural landscape features as an important element of park design. Regional parks primarily provide opportunities for day use activities that may include picnicking, hiking, sports, fishing, canoeing and boating, and environmental interpretation and appreciation. Fields and courts for organized sports activities may be secondary uses.

SERVICE AREA

Regional parks provide recreation opportunities of interest to diverse groups throughout the community, and may attract visitors from outside the immediate area.

OTHER LOCATION AND DESIGN CRITERIA

Jensen Park, located southeast of Yankee Hill Road and South 84th Street was acquired with the intent of development as a regional park facility in the future. In addition, acquisition of a new regional park site in the eastern portion of the Stevens Creek Basin is anticipated. Acquisition and development of additional regional parks within the future urban area associated with Lincoln during the 25 year planning horizon is not anticipated. Rather it is anticipated that the City will work with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (NRD) to provide recreation facilities around the Salt Valley Lakes and other natural resource sites. Ultimately public park areas around the Salt Valley Lakes may gradually transition from management by the Game and Parks Commission to management by the City as the surrounding area urbanizes. Similarly, some sites presently managed by the Lower Platte South NRD may transition to management by the City as the surrounding area urbanizes. Efforts should be made over time to provide trail access to the Salt Valley Lakes and other natural resource sites via connections to the Salt Valley Heritage Greenway and associated tributary stream corridors.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to enhance opportunities for interpretation of native landscapes and eco-systems indigenous to eastern Nebraska through acquisition of additional parcels of native prairie for buffering and enhancement of visitor facilities at the Pioneers Park Nature Center.
- Explore opportunities to provide enhanced water recreation activities at Holmes Lake in Holmes Park.
- Develop Jensen Park as a regional park as the surrounding area is urbanized and funding is available. The land should remain in agricultural use in the interim.
- Continue to develop a cooperative relationship with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Lower Platte South Natural Resource District to provide recreation facilities within rural areas of the community.
- Identify and acquire a regional park site for the future development in the eastern portion of the Stevens Creek

Basin.

COMMUNITY PARKS

DESCRIPTION

Community parks are comprised of sites that are thirty to fifty acres and are readily accessible from arterial streets and commuter/recreation trails. Community parks may include fields and play courts for organized sports, a playground with an accessible fall surface, facilities for day use activities including a picnic shelter and restroom, seating, walking paths, off-street parking, swimming pools, and recreation centers.

SERVICE STANDARD

1.5 acres of community parkland per 1,000 residents.

SERVICE AREA

Approximately 2 mile radius in the urban area.

OTHER LOCATION AND DESIGN CRITERIA

- Locate community parks on a collector or arterial street to accommodate automobile access and parking. Park sites shall also be readily accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists from a commuter/recreation trail.
- Locate community parks adjacent to middle schools where possible.
- Community parks shall be adjacent to greenway linkages.
- Provide buffering between community park activities and adjacent residential areas to minimize traffic and noise impacts.
- Design standards for field and parking lot lighting should seek to minimize glare, light spill-over onto adjacent properties, and impacts on the dark night sky.
- Select sites for community parks that allow for multiple functions, such as storm water management or habitat conservation.
- Establish Youth Baseball/Softball complexes as part of community parks throughout the city. Partnerships should be formed with the youth baseball organizations and Lincoln Public Schools for maintenance of utilization strategies.

STRATEGIES

- Acquire and develop community park sites through regular “quality of life bond” issue initiatives and capital improvement program allocations.
- ~~Formalize joint planning activities between the City of Lincoln and Lincoln Public Schools for selection and acquisition of future school/park sites.~~

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

DESCRIPTION

Neighborhood parks are comprised of sites that are approximately eight to twelve acres and are centrally located

within areas of residential development. Typical activity areas include playground equipment, open lawn area for informal games and activities, play court with a single basketball goal for informal games, seating, and walking paths.

SERVICE STANDARD

Two acres of neighborhood parkland per 1,000 residents.

SERVICE AREA

Approximately ½ mile radius in the urban area; neighborhood parks are anticipated to generally be located within the center of each mile section.

OTHER LOCATION AND DESIGN CRITERIA

- Locate neighborhood parks close to the center of residential areas and within walking distance of a majority of residents. Park sites should be readily accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Locate neighborhood parks adjacent to elementary schools where possible.
- Locate neighborhood parks adjacent to greenway linkages where possible.
- Locate park sites where residents living in surrounding homes can view activities in the park to provide for informal supervision.
- Where possible, select sites for neighborhood parks that allow for multiple functions, such as storm water management or habitat conservation.

STRATEGIES

- Identify opportunities to acquire and develop neighborhood parks in established neighborhoods that are deficient in neighborhood park resources.
- ~~Establish and implement park system development fees for acquisition and development of neighborhood parks.~~
- ~~Formalize~~ Continue joint planning activities between the City of Lincoln and Lincoln Public Schools for selection and acquisition of future school/park sites.

COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTERS & RECREATION ACTIVITY CENTERS

DESCRIPTION

“Community recreation centers” are dedicated multi-purpose facilities designed to accommodate a variety of recreation, social and human service programs serving multiple generations. Community centers are approximately 24,000 to 30,000 square feet in size and include a gymnasium. Community centers should be designed and programmed to offer programs by a variety of agencies and organizations based upon identified needs within the associated service area.

“Recreation activity centers” are anticipated to be dedicated spaces within schools intended to house staff and equipment storage associated with recreation and human service programs offered in the associated school buildings. These dedicated spaces would be approximately 2,000 square feet in size and integrated into the overall design and layout of each school building. It is anticipated that programming would occur outside of regular school hours in multi-purpose spaces such as gymnasiums or cafeterias.

SERVICE STANDARD

There should be a community recreation center or recreation activity center located at each new elementary school, and a recreation activity center located at each new middle school.

SERVICE AREA

Approximately a 2 mile radius in the urban area.

OTHER LOCATION AND DESIGN CRITERIA

- Community recreation centers should generally be located at elementary school sites co-located with neighborhood park sites. Community recreation centers may also be freestanding in community park sites, if determined to be the most suitable location for providing services to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- The City shall develop a plan for future placement and development of community recreation centers and recreation activity centers in cooperation with other recreation, human and social service organizations within the community. This plan should capitalize upon opportunities for partnerships with other agencies and organizations, and should seek to make the best use of resources within the community. It is anticipated that some community recreation centers and recreation activity centers will be developed and operated by Lincoln Parks and Recreation, and others will be developed and operated by other community organizations such as the YMCA.
- The City and Lincoln Public Schools should continue to coordinate planning activities such that consideration is given to integrating community recreation centers and recreation activity centers with new elementary and middle schools as they are developed.
- Locate community recreation centers where they will be accessible by commuter/recreation trails.

STRATEGIES

- Develop a plan with other interested agencies and organizations for future development and operation of community recreation centers and recreation activity centers.
- Coordinate planning efforts with Lincoln Public Schools to ensure that funding is available for construction of community recreation centers and recreation activity centers in tandem with new elementary and middle schools.
- Replace Air Park Recreation Center with a new facility at a school in the Air Park area, at such time as Arnold Heights Elementary School is renovated or replaced.

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WIMMING POOLS

DESCRIPTION

These are facilities developed to provide opportunities for water recreation activities. The most recently constructed outdoor swimming pools (Highlands Pool and University Place Pool) are designed as “pool in a park” facilities. These pools feature zero depth entry, interactive water features and a deep well for diving activities.

OTHER LOCATION AND DESIGN CRITERIA

Attendance at swimming pools reached a peak in the 1970's and has been declining in spite of increasing population in the community and construction of additional swimming pool facilities. The City aquatics program currently recovers approximately 40 percent of its operating costs, thus the program is subsidized by general tax revenue sources. The City should maintain its commitment to outdoor water recreation activities, however no additional

neighborhood swimming pools should be constructed in the future. New facilities should be located and designed to serve quadrant areas of the community in the future. New swimming pool facilities should be readily accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to maintain and upgrade mechanical systems of existing outdoor swimming pools. Regularly add features to neighborhood pools to make them inviting and attractive to visitors.
- ~~Add a “Lazy River” floating course~~ Continue to enhance Star City Shores.
- Consider development of one new outdoor family aquatics center to serve residents living in the southeastern area of the community. The facility should be developed at a community park location and be sized to accommodate 600 to 800 visitors.
- Investigate opportunities to develop a year-round (i.e., indoor/outdoor) competition and leisure pool facility.
- Relocate Kuklin Pool to a location north of “O” Street to provide better access to residents living in the Malone, Hartley and Clinton Neighborhoods.

INDOOR ICE ARENA

DESCRIPTION

An indoor ice arena is designed to house one or more indoor ice rinks and associated mechanical systems and activity areas. A variety of ice recreation activities are offered including ice hockey league sports, figure skating training, public skating, and ice sports camps.

SERVICE STANDARD

A feasibility study completed in 2001 identified the need for at least one additional indoor ice rink based on population and demographic information.

STRATEGIES

Investigate opportunities to partner with community groups and organizations and the private sector to develop an indoor ice arena to support public ice recreation activities.

OPEN SPACE AND GREENWAY LINKAGES

DESCRIPTION

Open space and greenway linkages are a system or network of areas preserved in an undeveloped state due to unique natural attributes, such as floodplains and associated riparian areas, saline and freshwater wetlands, and native prairies. Some areas may be protected through conservation easements that allow for compatible land use activities such as row crop farming or pasturing. Fee simple title may be acquired for other areas that are best maintained in a natural state due to particularly sensitive features (e.g., rare or sensitive habitat areas), or that have value for resource-based recreation activities (e.g., hiking, interpretive activities, wildlife viewing). The local and regional commuter/recreation trail system should be integrated with the greenway linkages.

OTHER LOCATION AND DESIGN CRITERIA

- Criteria and priorities should be developed to determine land areas that are most appropriately acquired and managed by a public agency.
- An organizational structure involving public agencies and private organizations should be developed to coordinate land conservation activities.
- Private organizations should be encouraged to participate in land conservation activities.
- Planning for commuter/recreation trails should utilize greenway linkages.

STRATEGIES

- Formalize cooperative agreements between the City of Lincoln, Lancaster County and the Lower Platte South Natural Resource District regarding planning, acquisition and management of open space and greenway areas.
- Utilize a “Rain to Recreation” approach to open space and greenway linkages that is coordinated with the City’s watershed management program and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District to reduce flood damages, protect water quality and natural areas, while providing for recreational and educational opportunities so as to realize multiple benefits.
- Establish an organizational structure for coordination of open space conservation activities between public agencies and private organizations.
- Encourage development of a private land trust organization.
- Identify open space areas that are particularly valued by community residents for rare or unique attributes and establish quantifiable development regulations utilizing a balance of incentive and mandatory measures.

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RBAN FOREST

DESCRIPTION

The native landscape of the region surrounding Lincoln is tall grass prairie. The trees that shelter homes from the elements, purify the air, provide wildlife habitat, stabilize the soil, and define the character of neighborhoods and business areas have all essentially been planted and nurtured. It is recognized that trees, both occurring naturally and planted and managed, are essential to the quality of life of residents and the character of the community.

OTHER LOCATION AND DESIGN CRITERIA

The community should continue its commitment to establishing and managing an Lincoln’s urban forest shall be recognized as a valuable and essential component of our infrastructure for planning, management, economic and budgetary purposes. All management and design decisions concerning our public and private infrastructure shall take into consideration what impact they will have on our urban forest.

STRATEGIES

- The physical, financial, and human resources within our city government and community shall be fully optimized to effectively sustain and manage our public tree infrastructure.
- Our urban forest will be composed of a thriving and sustainable mix of tree species and ages that creates a contiguous healthy ecosystem.
- All trees on city property will be systematically and proactively maintained according to accepted

professional standards and on an established scheduled.

- Our public tree infrastructure will be valued and properly cared for by the city and its citizens as a vital environmental, economic and community asset.
- Commitment to replanting street trees that have been removed but not replaced due to budgetary constraints shall be a priority to reduce gaps in the streetscapes of residential areas throughout the city.
- Establish a complementary balance between our green and gray infrastructures to maximize city assets and minimize environmental degradation.
- Define and designate our urban forest as a valuable component of our public infrastructure for both planning and budget purposes.
- Establish a tree canopy goal or target for our urban forest using policies, procedures, priorities, and dedicated resources.

—STRATEGIES

- ~~Continue planting public trees along streets and in parks.~~
- ~~Provide financial resources to assure adequate management of public trees, including development and management of an inventory and associated data base.~~
- ~~Develop programs to encourage public participation in planting and management of public trees.~~
- ~~Investigate development of tree preservation regulations that encourage conservation of trees unique due to species, size, or location.~~